

MICRO-LEARNING INTERVENTIONS EFFECTIVELY REDUCE STIGMATISING ATTITUDES EXPRESSED BY HEALTH WORKERS TOWARDS PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV AND PEOPLE WHO INJECT DRUGS

Authors:

Broady T¹, Brener L¹, Cama E¹, Lancaster K¹, Treloar C¹

¹ Centre for Social Research in Health, UNSW Sydney

Background:

Stigma is a major barrier to health care access for people affected by blood-borne viruses. Australia's national health strategies have goals to reduce stigma, however, evidence regarding effective stigma reduction interventions is lacking. Drawing on social norms theory, this study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of online micro-learning interventions in reducing stigmatising attitudes held by Australian health workers.

Methods:

Australian health care workers were recruited via Qualtrics and randomly allocated to one of two interventions: 1) people living with HIV (PLHIV, n=332); 2) people who inject drugs (PWID, n=321). Participants completed baseline and post-intervention measures of their own attitudes and their perceptions of their colleagues' attitudes towards the relevant group. The intervention consisted of a video presentation by an experienced health worker, who discussed research findings challenging assumptions about colleagues' attitudes. Changes in attitudes from pre- to post-intervention were analysed using Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Tests.

Results:

At baseline, health workers believed that their colleagues held more stigmatising attitudes towards PLHIV than they personally did ($Z=9.23$, $p<.001$), but reported no difference between their own attitudes and their colleagues' attitudes towards PWID ($Z=.84$, $p=.40$). After the intervention, participants reported less stigmatising attitudes towards PWID ($Z=6.68$, $p<.001$), but no significant change in attitudes towards PLHIV ($Z=.05$, $p=.96$). After the video, participants perceived their colleagues to have less stigmatising attitudes towards both PWID ($Z=5.49$, $p<.001$) and PLHIV ($Z=2.43$, $p=.02$).

Conclusion:

Brief videos informed by social norms theory demonstrated positive results in reducing stigmatising attitudes held by health workers and in changing their perceptions of their colleagues' attitudes. Micro-learning such as this has the potential to be scaled, tailored to different contexts, and embedded into professional development activities for health workers and students, which may contribute meaningfully to reducing stigma and discrimination towards population groups affected by blood-borne viruses in health care settings.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

This project was funded by the Australian Government Department of Health.